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Security Council

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Provisional

5897th meeting

Thursday, 22 May 2008, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Sir John Sawers	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Du Xiacong
	Costa Rica	Mr. Ballestero
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Mubarak
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Desyatnikov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (S/2008/330)

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The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (S/2008/330)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Burundi, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Nsanze (Burundi) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Johan Løvald, Chairman of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Norway.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Løvald to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/330, which contains the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Johan Løvald, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Løvald: I want to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to participate in your meeting on Burundi in my capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is timely that the Security Council once more is focusing on the situation in Burundi.

I have just returned from Burundi, together with a delegation from the Peacebuilding Commission, and it must be said that Burundi is presently facing a number of difficult challenges requiring international attention. Allow me to highlight some of them.

First, with regard to the security situation, it goes without saying that the present security situation in the country is of particular concern. It is clear that without peace and security, there can be no development or economic recovery. The recent and ongoing fighting between Palipehutu-Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and Government security forces is a source of deep concern. The return of the Palipehutu-FNL to Bujumbura last week is promising, however. Without Palipehutu-FNL's return to the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the full implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement of 2006, the concrete peace consolidation gains that Burundi has achieved so far will be jeopardized. Several thousand people who have been internally displaced as a result of the recent fighting add in a dramatic way to the seriousness of the present security situation.

Secondly, with regard to the Parliament, there is also reason for concern over the recent political crisis that continues to block its work. The political parties need to find a way out of the present impasse in a spirit of reconciliation and dialogue, so that the Parliament can resume functioning when it meets again in June. A continued deadlock not only undermines trust in the political system, it will also impact negatively on international efforts to assist Burundi.

The third challenge is the elections. The 2010 national elections are already high on the political agenda in Burundi. Successful democratic elections will be important for the development of the country. In that regard, I would like to underline the importance of preparing a roadmap for holding the elections in a timely, well-prepared and transparent manner, and of the establishment of a national electoral commission. The Peacebuilding Commission is committed to supporting efforts in that respect and invites the Government to initiate that process.

Fourth is the concern over the land issue, for Burundi is a densely populated country. The return of a large number of refugees who went into exile in 1972 and 1993 will exacerbate an already existing problem of land and will pose an additional challenge to the State's administrative, judicial and legislative capacity, and it could be a source of tension for the consolidation of peace in Burundi. I want to bring to the attention of Council members that the Peacebuilding Commission will have, on 27 May, a thematic meeting on land issues in Burundi, with particular focus on the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Fifthly and finally, with regard to the economic situation, Burundi is among the poorest countries in the world, and it is experiencing extra suffering under the present international economic situation. As described in the report of the Secretary-General, the country continues to suffer from structural poverty and stagnating standards. That complicates peacebuilding efforts and underscores the need for continued support from the international community.

Last time I addressed the Council in my capacity of Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, at the 5793rd meeting on 6 December 2007, I reported that the Commission the day before had adopted the Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism for the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding and had entered the implementation phase of its work. Hence, we have focused on how to assist Burundi in responding to our common peacebuilding priorities. Now we are preparing for the first biannual review of the implementation of the Strategic Framework at the end of June.

The Government of Burundi and its partners have instituted an inclusive and participatory process to prepare for the biannual review. Diverse stakeholders, including representatives of the Government, political parties, civil society organizations, the private sector, women's organizations, the national council of wise men, religious groups and international partners, are all involved.

I would like commend the Government and all the national stakeholders for their constructive engagement in the implementation of the Strategic Framework and the review process. It is encouraging that the Government of Burundi has been able to give priority to this in the present situation. It shows commitment. Let me also use this occasion to thank the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) for assisting the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Burundi so ably in that regard.

The Peacebuilding Commission is committed to undertaking urgent action, should the biannual review in June reveal gaps that need to be filled in order for our efforts to succeed — and indeed they must.

To sum up, peacebuilding is at present under stress in Burundi. The following courses of action commend themselves.

First, given the present challenges facing the country, the international community must reiterate its pledge of solidarity with Burundi and remain steadfast in its support for peacebuilding in the country.

Secondly, the security situation in the country, and its potential regional implications, must be given special and ongoing attention. In particular, we must consider how we can best support the full implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement from 2006. The entry into force of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region offers an additional avenue for support.

Thirdly, in that respect we must welcome the statement of the Political Directorate of 18 May in which the Government of Burundi and the Palipehutu-FNL reiterated their commitment to respect the terms of the Agreement of Principles towards lasting peace, security and stability signed on 18 June 2006 and the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement of 7 September 2006.

Fourthly, we must also welcome that the two parties agree that the current hostilities should cease immediately in the event all obligations of the Government of Burundi and the Palipehutu-FNL are respected.

Those commitments are indeed the crux of the matter. As always, the primary responsibility rests with the parties themselves. Yet the Regional Initiative and the South African Facilitation have taken on a crucial role. This Council and, indeed, the international community must give full support to their efforts at this critical time. The international community must stand together in pushing the peace process forward. In the report of the Secretary-General, special attention is given to the fragile situation in the country. We must encourage the Secretary-General to remain focused on the situation and, at all times, to consider bringing to

bear the full weight of his good offices should the situation warrant it.

Sixth, continued attention by the Security Council to the security situation is, of course, especially important. The Council must follow the present situation closely. As we approach the elections in 2010, we are entering a period of potentially greater instability. That may require increased vigilance on the part of the international community.

Seventh, the Peacebuilding Commission itself is, of course, actively seized of the situation in Burundi at the present time. It must be said quite clearly that all Peacebuilding Commission members remain strongly committed to peacebuilding in Burundi. That was reiterated during our recent visit there. At the same time, it is also clear that practical peacebuilding can succeed only when all stakeholders are clearly committed to peace.

Eighth, there can be no doubt that Burundians want peace and development. At this time, it is of particular importance that the commitments made by the international community to reconstruction and development be honoured. The present difficult international economic situation underscores this.

Ninth and finally, it would be a highly meaningful response to the country's situation if the political parties in parliament could resume their important work without further delay. That would also seem necessary in order to begin well-organized preparations for the upcoming elections at an early date, thus making sure that they will be free and fair and will contribute to political stability.

A future free from fear and want is also available to all Burundians. It will require determination by all in order for them to get there. This is the time for Burundians to come together and to overcome the difficulties. At the same time, the international community must remain vigilant and unequivocal in its determination to support them in this important struggle.

The President: I thank Mr. Løvald for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Nsanze (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset, on the occasion of the presentation of the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (S/2008/330), to express my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary-General for the United Nations assistance from which my country has benefited for some 15 years. My sincere thanks go also to all members of the Security Council, who are constantly following the developments in the situation, and for the proposed solutions that they are tirelessly providing. In addition, I wish to thank the international community as a whole — all those who, near or far away, observe and act when they deem it useful.

My delegation takes note of the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi. That report, like the previous ones, is very well documented and provides as many details as possible on the developments in the situation, supported by relatively convincing explanations. It is full of information, just as the period covered has been full of events, although we note some anachronisms and contradictions.

From reading the report, one gets the impression that the country is once again entering an infernal cycle of violence, at a time when the international community was expecting the re-establishment of peace and recovery through a decisive mobilization aimed at development. Undoubtedly, it was in the context of fear and uncertainty caused by the attacks of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) on Bujumbura and a number of other areas that the report was written against a background of pessimism.

Very fortunately, subsequent events have made it possible to regain confidence and to look to the future with greater optimism. Indeed, the FNL's long-awaited return to the negotiation table and the resumption of the work of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism are reassuring both to Burundians themselves and to the international community. Here, I should like to thank all actors, particularly the Security Council, the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, the South African mediation and the Peacebuilding Commission, which did their utmost to make that return possible.

However, that optimism may fade once again if useful measures are not taken to consolidate the gains already made, while we mobilize to achieve other milestones in order to move decisively forward. We cannot predict here the outcome of the negotiations

under way. But, however they may develop, the Security Council and the international community in general must help us ensure that it will not be possible to turn back. The spectre and the psychosis of a new war must be banished forever. That will be possible if, in particular, the Chairman of the FNL, Agathon Rwasa, also returns to the country to take part in political life.

Moreover, certain political parties that are adopting a belligerent posture, even though they are no longer supposed to be in the opposition, should be brought to reason. The same applies to other political parties or factions, groups and even individuals who — hiding behind a constitution that is ill conceived and, for the time being, impossible to revise — prefer to sow disorder in order to test the Government.

We note other points in the report that are deserving of our comments. We shall not dwell on them here; there are other forums and many opportunities to discuss them. We will address only those related to institutional deadlock, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and transitional justice.

In paragraph 91 of the report, we read, "All political parties represented in Parliament are reminded in this regard of their obligations to those who have elected them, and to the country as a whole". That is particularly true because many members of parliament themselves do not know that they have a mandate from the people. A number of them even seem to be unaware of which political parties they belong to, even though they were elected on closed lists of candidates submitted by well-known political parties. Others have simply left their parties and claim to be independent. All of them are distorting good democratic practice. We must find mechanisms to restore order and to oblige everyone to act within a legal framework. If the constitution turns out to be an obstacle, then it will have to be revised.

The threat to peace can also stem from discontent, even from despair brought about by the uncertainty faced by former soldiers and combatants, who have returned to civilian life without sufficient means to reintegrate into society. That is all entirely true. That is why the Government is in the process of knocking at every door in order to find additional resources to take up the challenge of raising the living standards of these people. Will it manage to do this? Perhaps, if the appeals that it is making are heeded.

As concerns transitional justice, first of all it should be acknowledged that judicial reform has not yet achieved the desired results. Here we would like to praise the substantial support that the Peacebuilding Commission has given us in this regard, and we appeal to all who wish to offer support and can do so to do the same. We are thinking, in particular, of our partners who promised funds during the round table held in Bujumbura in May 2007, and would ask them to discharge their obligations.

As for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it has had some difficulty in getting started for several reasons. The most plausible of those is that some groups and individuals who are not prepared to face up to the evidence against them prefer to confuse the issue as they rush to obtain support against the process. We would ask the United Nations to be cautious, because some will seek to use it for that purpose.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultation, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.